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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: AMCIT HOSTAGE SITUATION RESOLVED AT GHANA GOLD MINE

Summary

¶1. (SBU) On November 9, Ghanaian mine workers held hostage senior staff, including Amcits, of a mine operated by the Ghanaian subsidiary)- Bogoso Gold Ltd. (BGL) -- of a U.S. based mining company, Golden Star. BGL informed Post and other affected Embassies about the situation on November 10, stating that the situation was the result of a labor dispute.

Ambassador organized core EAC members, who coordinated throughout the day with BGL, Ghana government and law enforcement officials, and other Embassies, to gather information and organize a solution. Post also contacted Operations Center (Ref) and prepared draft press guidance. BGL notified post at 2:00 pm that Ghana's Western Regional Ministry had convinced the miners to free the hostages, who are reportedly unharmed. Post is still verifying reports with the BGL, but it appears between one and three Amcits were among the group held by the miners. End Summary.

Rundown of Incident

¶2. (SBU) At approximately 9:30 am on Thursday, November 10, Post's A/RSO received a telephone call from Peter Turner, Operations Manager for Bogoso Gold Ltd. (BGL), reporting an alleged hostage situation, reportedly involving U.S. Citizens. Turner reported that at 4:00 pm Wednesday, November 9, approximately 150 Ghanaian mine workers took hostage 26 senior staff members at one of the three BGL-operated mines in Ghana (located near Tarkwa in the western region of Ghana). The initial report stated that up to six (6) of the 26 alleged hostages were reportedly Amcits. Turner later corrected this and stated there were three (3) Amcits among the hostages.

¶3. (SBU) According to Turner, the hostages had not been harmed and were allowed to move freely about the fenced-in plant area adjacent to the mine. However, they were not allowed to leave the site or receive visitors or food. They had access to telephone and internet, and were in contact with the Accra office. The dispute was contractual in nature, although the mine has had numerous problems with local residents, NGOs, and the GoG (see background below).

¶4. (SBU) RSO briefed the Ambassador and core EAC members on the situation at 9:45 am. The Ambassador immediately assigned action officers, sending a consular officer to the company headquarters in Accra, and instructing RSO, DAO, and A/DCM to contact the police, military, security forces, Foreign Affairs Ministry, Interior Ministry, and Western Regional Minister's office. A/DCM contacted Ops Center and Post started an incident log. RSO informed the DS Command Center, and DAO contacted Eucom. Emboffs also liaised with colleagues at other affected Embassies) Australia, UK, Canada, South Africa, and Ireland) and Ambassador participated in a 2:00 pm information sharing meeting at the Australian High Commission. Post's Public Affairs Office drafted proposed AF press guidance.

Resolution of Incident

¶5. (SBU) During the 2:00 pm meeting at the Australian High Commission, BGL personnel called to report that the standoff had been resolved and the hostages were free. Shortly thereafter, BGL Operations Manager Turner called RSO's office to confirm the hostages had been released, were well -- despite not having any food since the day before--, and that he was unaware of any medical issues. Apparently the hostage takers disbursed following the arrival of the Ghanaian Deputy Regional Minister (reportedly with police or military), who apparently addressed the group telling them that he had ordered that no one was to be fired and that they should all return to work the following morning.

¶6. (SBU) BGL subsequently provided a list of the staff that had been held hostage, showing only one dual US/UK national among the hostages. Post is attempting to clarify the discrepancy and will report any relevant information next week, but we are assured that the hostage portion of this situation is officially resolved. The company itself is still facing difficult labor issues that it will have to deal with. We may hear from them again. Post will meet with company leadership and possibly visit the site to discern the nature of the company's relationship with workers and local communities, as well as assess the possibility of future

incident.

Background on Bogoso Mine

¶7. (SBU) The mine is an open pit gold mine near Prestea (and Tarkwa) in the Western Region. BHP Billiton originally operated the mine and sold it to Golden Star in 1999. Golden Star's offices are in Colorado, but the majority of the company is owned by Canadians. The CEO, Peter Bradford, is reputedly Australian.

¶8. (SBU) According to media reports, the mine has had numerous problems with environmental issues and community relations over the last year. On or about June 21, 2005, there was a shooting incident in which several people were injured during a mass protest of villagers near the mine. It is not known who did the shooting. Ghana's EPA ordered the mine closed due to problems with chemical leaks in September.

In October 2005, cyanide leaked from a holding pool into the local river, killing fish. On November 2, however, the EPA allowed the mine to resume full operations. A local chief engaged the company in talks on November 7, after which he announced that dialogue was the best way to move forward and called an end to protests. On that same day the company announced it would build a \$200 million poultry farm project to help the local economy.

BRIDGEWATER